Mark Lane: Uncovering an F.B.I. Conspiracy, The Story of James Earl Ray (KPFK, 1989)

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ORIGINAL: https://www.pacificaradioarchives.org/recording/kz1761
Mark Lane, political activist and attorney for James Earl Ray, discusses the F.B.I. conspiracy to elimiate King. He explores the events which lead up to Ray's presence in Memphis on the day of the killing. Ray is described as a totally nonviolent, bumbling, small time criminal.|UNCOVERING AN F.B.I. CONSPIRACY : THE STORY OF JAMES EARL RAY / Mark Lanel interviewed by Chalres Bell and Lucia Chappelle. - Mark Lane, political activist and attorney for James Earl Ray, discusses the F.B.I. conspiracy to elimiate King. He explores the events which lead up to Ray's presence in Memphis on the day of the killing. Ray is described as a totally nonviolent, bumbling, small time criminal. - RECORDED: 5 Apr. 1989.

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martin luther king was assassinated on april 4 1968. his alleged assassin james earl ray remains in a tennessee prison serving time for previous offenses he has never faced trial for the murder of king lawyer author and activist mark lane is rey's attorney and for the last 21 years has investigated the case and tried to bring it to court pacifica correspondent charles bell interviewed lane in april of 1989 about his involvement with james earl ray and the evidence he has uncovered at the request of a number of black leaders who felt that putting james earl ray away without a trial was an effort by the united states government to hide the facts from the american people at their request including jesse jackson and ralph abernathy and other black leaders i met with james earl ray and tried to get for him a trial because that trial would have focused the attention of the american people on facts for the first time on the facts surrounding the death of dr martin luther king i moved to memphis met with mr ray met with judges down there ray was actually entitled to a trial he never had that trial he had been represented just before the trial by mr haines and his son mr haines two lawyers who were prepared to try that case the government somehow insinuated percy foreman into that jail cell just before the trial was to take place mr foreman uh did a terrific salesman job on behalf of himself convincing james r ray that his lawyers were going to sell him out and that he percy foreman was the one person in the world who could save james earl ray ray

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who could save james earl ray ray it should be pointed out had been kept in a cell specially designed for him 24 hours a day in that cell with lights on him 24 hours a day with cameras focused on him he suffered from sensory deprivation he was watched 24 hours a day by guards one of the guards told me the place was so sensitive we could hear a cockroach walk across the concrete floor where he was in that condition and he agreed to have percy foreman represent him as soon as percy foreman represented him the job said well mr ray could have foreman but you can never change lawyers again and race that that's okay and then foreman went back to the cell with james or ray and said to him i'm pleading you guilty if you don't plead guilty i'm going to tell the jury i believe you're guilty and then an fbi agent came in and said to ray your father escaped

from a prison 50 years ago we know where he is he's an old man now will pick him up he'll die in prison unless you plead guilty with all this pressure ray pleaded guilty but did say to the trial court there had been a conspiracy when ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison he immediately was removed from this 24-hour surveillance have the first good night's sleep in eight months woke up in the morning and wrote a letter to the trial judge judge battle and said i was coerced and lessons tortured into entering that plea of guilty i want a trial the judge went on vacation to miami when he came back he picked up ray's letter read it and dropped dead literally dropped dead on that letter now under the provisions of the tennessee code annotated mr ray was entitled to a new trial because there's a provision which says it's known uh by people in prison as the jackpot provision and that is if you make an application for new trial and the judge dies or becomes incurably insane before he rules on it then it is

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before he rules on it then it is automatically granted rey was entitled to new trial after that i got into the picture tried to get that new trial for him judges throughout memphis throughout tennessee said to me you're right he's entitled to new trial please do not bring it before me we cannot give him a new trial there's just too much pressure he cannot have a trial and neither james or ray nor the american people have had which that which we are all entitled to a trial which would expose all of the facts surrounding the death of dr martin luther king jr could we go back for a moment for after all we're talking about uh something that happened 21 years ago and many of our listeners may not be familiar with the exact details could you briefly outline the circumstances of dr king's death and how the finger got pointed at uh james earl ray and how he was subsequently caught dr king had been to memphis tennessee to assist in the demonstration by the union of garbage employees garbage collector employees almost all of whom were black and uh he was also building at that time a poor people's march on washington this poor people's campaign was going to bring tens maybe hundreds of thousands of people here to washington dc for the purpose of remaining in the city camping out and staying here until the economic system of america was changed dr king said that what is required is justice requires that the economic system be changed so that we do not have so many poor people so many homeless people so many desperate people people without hope well there are so many multi-millionaires and other wealthy people in this country and we must address the system and change the system in the middle of all this dr king was called to memphis by the union of the garbage employees he went down there and had planned to

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he went down there and had planned to stay at the holiday in rivermont now was at this time that the federal bureau of investigation had embarked had been embarked for some time upon a campaign to destroy dr king in fact in the atlanta georgia office of the fbi was a group called the destroy king squad i interviewed arthur murtaugh special agent of the fbi who gave me a great deal of information about how they operated but their job was to destroy martin luther king and when it became clear that dr king was going to memphis they pulled out all of the stops they did not want dr king in the holiday in rivermont the holiday in rivermont is a tall building outside of the downtown area once you're in that lobby you're you are secure on your way up to your room and you're safe in the room they wanted him at the lorraine motel a small little motel built sort of like a shooting gallery it was a perfect place the fbi utilized its contacts in the media and in memphis and elsewhere and they started a campaign with documents written by the federal bureau of investigation agents saying why is dr king going to stay at the uh holiday in rivermont it's a luxury hotel owned by white people if he's such a crusader why doesn't he stay in the lorraine motel they even picked out the place the lorraine motel owned by negros perfectly respectable motel why doesn't he stay there andy young and others in charge of dr king's accommodations and memphis called dr king and said what are we going to do about this dr king laughed and said when we go down south we always stay in these previously segregated facilities that's how we break down segregation but his advisors down there in memphis felt that the pressure was so great that they better move him out of the holiday in rivermont into the

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of the holiday in rivermont into the rain motel and that's where he went now dr king wherever he went was followed by agents of the federal bureau of investigation for years years they never let him out of their sight in fact when dr king was given the nobel peace prize the nobel peace prize and went to oxford norway to accept it on the plane with him were fbi agents when he checked into a hotel in oslo there were fbi agents in the next room and they were bugging his room and they were bugging his telephone he was never out of their sight moments before dr king was murdered on april 4th 1968 all fbi surveillance was withdrawn moments before in addition to that the local police the memphis police had assigned every time dr king came to town the same officer ed reddit a black police officer to provide security and surveillance of dr king and he was in charge of the squad that day however there was a new new development in memphis and that is that a new man had taken over his name was frank holloman who had left the federal bureau of investigation frank holliman had been the officer of the fbi who personally ran j edgar hoover's office in washington d.c for mr hoover he left and became almost immediately the director of fire and police in memphis tennessee the only thing he did on april 4th 1968 and the day before was to tell ed reddit the black police officer in charge of surveillance of dr king that he should not be in charge of surveillance he should go home that there was a death threat against him and ed read it was practically placed under house arrest by other police officers white police officers and forced to go home there were two other blacks on the scene however right across the street from the lorraine motel

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street from the lorraine motel where two black activists one of them floyd newson a really active supporter of dr king he was a fireman another black man was also a fireman now mr holliman as director of fire and police the first man ever to be director of both organizations at the same time in mexico's history he sent the two black firemen out of that firehouse and told them to report on april 4th to another fire station miles away they were needed in that fire station for which less with which they were sent and they were surplus employees at the fire station to which they were sent what frank holloman had succeeded in doing was removing any black activist in the fire department or the police department who would have been on the scene when dr king was shot that was done moments later one shot was fired dr king was killed now dr king was killed just after 6 pm is that right now how did the finger get pointed at um james earl ray and who or what was someone by the name of eric starvo gull well that was had used but uh it's hard to know exactly how the finger got pointed at james already because uh ray was in the general area ray was known i believe to those who killed dr king long before the shot was fired i believe that the evidence shows that in fact james o'rourke was broken out of the penitentiary in jefferson city missouri by those who later were involved in the plot to kill dr king and were probably involved in the plot to kill dr king when they broke him out of the penitentiary what was he in the penitentiary for at that time they've been involved in a number of small crimes remember james ray had spent a lot of time in prison for a lot of little crimes had never been charged not only never been charged with a single act of violence in his whole life had never been involved in a fight that anyone knows what he's a totally

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that anyone knows what he's a totally non-violent bumbling small-time criminal they broke him out of jefferson missouri penitentiary and uh surrounded him talked to him on one occasion of it and got him involved in doing little things bringing cars into the united states and finally told him that what he desired most he moved he went to canada but they brought him back to united states what he desired most was a passport to get him to europe and a few dollars so that he would never have to come back because he faced or more years in jail in missouri plus an additional five years for escape he was a perfect rabbit if he was charged for example with jay walking he would have to flee instead of face the charge because it's not the jaywalking which would be the problem but once he was back in the hands of authorities he might spend the rest of his life in prison for escaping after what he was in jail for and the first time so he was the rabbit who would run he was perfect from the viewpoint of those who wanted to fix blame on him finally he was met by a group by an individual who said i'll give you a passport and a lot of money you can go to europe and never come back but i want you to pick up a rifle and we want to show it to some people because the group is

going to come into memphis and look at rifles if they like them we'll buy more give them to these rifles this is for some revolutionaries for something in latin america and they will give us large sums of money and i will get you a passport from that money ray thought this was his ticket out he got a rifle he brought it to memphis tennessee he checked into the rooming house with the rifle met with his friend raul there and then ralph said well these guys don't want to see you so you just stay out of the building guard to your car but don't drive it around just walk around and then come on back a little later they were setting way up ray however looked at the car and realized it was short of gas and decided this would get away after they made the deal they'd be better his friend raul would

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they'd be better his friend raul would be more appreciative if he filled the car up with gas he drove away to fill the proper gas and at that time the shot was fired which killed black king now there was one witness one witness who actually saw the killer come out of the bathroom from which the shot had been fired her name was grace walden or grace stephen she lived with a man named charlie stevens and she this is a statement that she made at the time she was questioned by reporters people came over the building and it was determined to decide to come to the bathroom she said i was here in my apartment my room which is right next to this common bathroom on the second floor and while i was here she said charlie had been drinking a lot of beer started banging on the bathroom door and said i want to get in and who's in there and the person whoever it was turns out it was the killer doctor king did not answer charlie became furious kicked the door then charlie finally had been drunk stumbled down the stairs went in the backyard and started to urinate outside at that time a shot was fired grace stevens looked through her open door as a man came out of the bathroom she described the man later he was carrying something in his hand and he went down the stairs she was the only witness in the world who saw the killer as he left the area but later when some pictures of james earway she said it was not that person in any event after ray was picked up in london in the airport the hitler airport and brought back they wanted to bring him back to the united states but because there was a treaty between the united states and england an extradition treaty which states that probable cause must be proven before england will extradite anyone they needed some evidence against ray they had no evidence so they went to see grace walden stevens and said you're the only person in the world who saw him do something for your country just sign this after david saying he's the person she said you have a picture of her and

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she said you have a picture of her and they showed her a picture of james ray she said how old is he how poor was he etc she said well i want to tell you something this is not the person i saw the person i saw is that he's 10 years older he's much shorter doesn't look anything like this man at all nothing and they threatened her then they offered her a 100 000 reward if she would sign she said i can't it's not the right man later they came to her house their fury center they came to her part and picked her up and illegally threw her in a mental institution in bolivar tennessee where she remained for 10 years until i got her out in the meantime they went back and they saw charlie stevens now remember charlie stevens was outside of the building he was urinating he was drunk and he never saw the man charlie stephen signed an affidavit saying yes james already is the man i saw that day and that's how rey was excellent that's the entire case against james ray the statement an affidavit signed with the promise of a hundred thousand dollars to mr stevens signed by mr stevens who was both drunk and in a situation a position where he could not even see who came out of the bathroom when i found out about this years later that grace walden was the witness i went to the mental institution and i talked with her and she told me exactly what i told you i tape recorded then they tried to arrest me the state authorities because i had that tape and we started a campaign then and then we were finally able to get her into a halfway house and i took her from that halfway house with her request to california with her fbi agents waiting uh to arrest us from the touchdown in los angeles for i every charge that donald freed and other activists on the west coast had assembled a group of about 200 people at the airport and they realized this would not be a small thing and decided not even to question us and that's how grace walden escaped however her words

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escaped however her words have been heard but not by the saudis in tennessee james or ray remains in prison the only evidence against him remains an affidavit signed by mr stevens who was induced to sign that by an offer of a hundred thousand dollars from the fbi and also with the understanding that grace students and women he had lived with was in a mental institution as punishment for not having signed a similar affidavit did mr stevens collect his hundred thousand by the way no he that's interesting he got a lawyer to collect a hundred thousand dollars for him and the authorities the court refused to give him the 100 000 to this day when last i looked at that which was 15 years after the event that court record was sealed as if there's some big national security question involved but an atomic weapon question that document it is that document has been sealed and no one can see the court record to find out why they denied him the money but they did demand the money they obviously took the position he didn't see anything he didn't know anything but they don't want the rest of the american people to know that because that's the entire case against mr ray in addition to the uh to the possibility that charlie stephens isn't a very reliable witness were there also witnesses who saw ray at the gas station where he was filling up the car with gas just about the time of the assassination witness who said that the way was there and that was at the time uh when dr king was being shot as they replayed it in their minds as to what they events for that day more than that you see what's important that um when we have major assassinations in this country we don't want trials we have razer was shot to death and the base in the gospels and courts building

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base in the gospels and courts building before he could be tried can't do that all the time people might get suspicious so in the case of james all right the idea since he was going to be the rabbit who would run was to let him run i mean here we have a man of the white mustang and minutes after the death of dr king the whole country the whole world knows this event has taken place we'll have to seal off a few of the roads around memphis and there's no way for a way to escape instead the memphis police department broadcast a phony chase of a car the radio tape is still available tonight sorry uh the sony chase of a car going in the opposite direction and based upon that phony story all the cars went in that direction the police cars to try to seal off the wrong area while ray drove peacefully up to atlanta in a white mustang that really easily identified the park and was never stopped and roe was then allowed to leave the country and never stop and ray was not going to be brought back remember it was not the fbi or the cia or the memphis police or the texas rangers who located the james earl it was scotland yard they found him that he throw and he was very embarrassed with the united states government because they never wanted him back but once he was caught they had to make good for the effort of getting him back and then preventing the trials from taking place and in fashion uh can't keep on as they say killing the alleged assassin and that's what they did ray was allowed to escape but when he was caught by the british authorities he was brought back and that a new method was engineered to prevent him ever from being tried now uh a number of uh prominent people you mentioned jack anderson you yourself for a prominent person have raised some serious question about this whole case you mentioned also that there are numerous witnesses who can testify to one or another strange aspect of the case everything from the police officer who was taken off

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who was taken off to the taxi driver and so on also items of physical evidence such as the tape you mentioned now with all of these things and all of these people out there available is there some mechanism by which rey can can can get a a retrial or is this simply a matter of historical speculation that will never never come to light well there's a mechanism but it takes a brave judge in tennessee do you know any i'm not familiar with tennessee judges but is there not one there may be one i don't know of any we've made these applications and the courts have been reluctant to put it mildly historically accurate to prevent this from happening even to prevent the case from being presented to them and this is this is the problem the problem is that the facts are there as dr king gave his life to struggle for justice and in the last days he struggled for a change in the economic system we have to all of us commit our firms i think to a movement in this country so

that there can be justice for james orwell and for all the people in prison who don't belong there who are victims of a traditional lack of justice in this country for those who become active in trying to change things or who are swept up in events which are bigger than themselves which they never really fully comprehend that's what's required now the american people speaking out on this question could you suggest in conclusion what action uh the listeners to this station might take if there is any that they could take in the specific matter of trying to get an open trial for james l ray i suppose this point through a letter writing campaign to the governor of tennessee saying we want to try out the german zorro if that became a national campaign issue i suppose there would be a trial and remember that trial is not only one which james earl was entitled to having spent all of

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earl was entitled to having spent all of these years in jail for crime which the evidence demonstrates he did not commit but that trial is one to which the american people are entitled so that we can learn something about who killed dr king james earley is in the position of lehigh and that is denied a trial in oswald's case it was important to kill him to silence him so that could there could never be a trial because a trial would have demonstrated that he oswald was not the known assassin of uh president ken in fact was not involved knowingly in any way a trial of james earl ray resulting in an acquittal would demonstrate to the american people but some persons were involved in the assassination of dr king and might focus attention finally on trying to find out who they are and if they operate in the united states today and they operate united states government today you have been listening to an interview with mark lane activist author and attorney for james earl ray the accused assassin of martin luther king the interviewer was charles bell the interview was conducted in april of 1989. this program is distributed by the pacifica radio archive for copies contact the pacifica radio archive at box 1892 universal city california 91608 that's box 8092 universal city 91608 to order by credit card call 873 that's 800-735-0230

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